

Remarks in Westland, Michigan September 17, 1996

The President. Thank you. Well, this is a pretty active crowd, even in the back there. Can you hear me? [Applause] Good. Thank you, Brian Duka. Now, I think he did a pretty good job. How many of you could stand up here in front of 10,000 or 12,000 people and do that? Give him a hand. Give him a hand. [Applause] That's great. I want to say thank you to the John Glenn choral group and the marching band. Thank you for playing and for singing for us.

Thank you, Congresswoman Lynn Rivers, for the power of your example, for fighting for education, including vocational education, for having a terrific, positive impact in Congress in such a short time, and for helping me to fight against the effort to cut education, the environment, Medicare and Medicaid, fighting against the Government shutdown, fighting against things that would have divided and weakened this country. You stood strong for the people of Michigan and the people of the United States. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Bill Ford, for being here, for all of the work you did in the 2 years we shared together to expand Head Start, improve college loans, open the doors of opportunity to millions of more young people in so many different ways. Thank you, Dr. Moore, Principal Thomas, William Ford Career Center Principal Bill Richardson. Thank you, my good friend Ed McNamara, the Wayne County executive.

Thank you, Mayor Thomas. We're glad to be in Westland. I understand I am the first President to come to Westland. I'll tell you something, folks, they get a good look at you on the evening news tonight, I won't be the last President to come to Westland, I can promise you that.

I'm glad to be joined today by Barbara Levin, the wife of Senator Carl Levin, a man I hope you will send back to the Senate to work with us. And Representative Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick and Eileen DeHart, thank you for being here. I want to thank the people who showed me around at the William Ford Career Center, Dr. Glen Baracy, Bill Richardson—the principal over there. And Todd Hoag and Craig Lindberg,

an instructor and a student, who were terrific; I thank them.

I understand that the John Glenn Rockets are 2 and 0. Congratulations! I think it is a great thing—let me say, as a man who is a friend of Senator John Glenn, I think it's a great thing for me to be at this school named after one of the great American heroes of the last 50 years. And I want you to know that, by pure coincidence, I was in Cincinnati, Ohio, with John Glenn yesterday and believe it or not, aboard Air Force One he actually wrote me this letter, which I'm going to give to the high school principal for the school's records when I finish. But I want you to know what it said. I want to read this letter to you, because it starts out in the way I would like to start this talk, anyway.

Here's what John Glenn said. "I am particularly sorry I could not come to Westland today, but I'm sure you will agree the program is in good hands with the President. I have been fortunate to receive some honors in my life, but none have ever made me more proud than have a school bear my name. We've all been lucky to be born in a time in our Nation's history when many notable things have happened and will continue to happen. I've always been more than grateful that I've been able to participate in some of those events on behalf of this great country of ours. To your generation, the opportunities are boundless and education is your key. What you are learning today will enable you to out-distance anything we have ever dreamed of. To every student, good luck; I know you will make us proud. Sincerely, John Glenn."

A generation ago, Senator Glenn reached for the stars and became the first American astronaut to orbit the Earth. Since then, he has shown us that the sky is not the limit.

Audience members. Dole-Kemp! Dole-Kemp!

The President. I don't blame them for doing this. They don't want you to hear the truth. It would bother them.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Wait, don't boo them. Don't boo them. We're glad to have them here, but we recognize free speech. You had your turn; now it's mine. And what I want you to think

about today is what was in that letter John Glenn wrote to you. I want every American, without regard to age, to have the opportunity to live up to his or her potential. To reach that potential, we have to build a bridge to the 21st century we can all walk across. And the foundation for that bridge has got to be the world's finest education system available to all Americans of all ages.

That is more true today than ever before. As I said when I was working on a book I wrote recently, I was trying to think of a title for it, and I remembered a poem that was read to me when I was in Ireland about magic points when hope and history come together. This is such a time.

The 21st century will give more people more chances to live out their dreams than any period in human history. Let me just give you one little example. The United States has just contracted with IBM to build a supercomputer that will do more calculations in one second than you can go home and do on your hand-held calculator in 30,000 years.

The young people in this audience today will not only be doing jobs that have not been invented yet, many of you will do work that has not been imagined yet. If we want that kind of world to work for all of us, we have got to build the right kind of bridge, and the foundation, I say again, is education and education for everyone—everyone.

To me, this is part of a simple but profound strategy: opportunity for all Americans; responsibility from all Americans; and a community in which every American, without regard to race or gender or income or where you start out in life, who works hard and shows up every day has a fair chance to live out their dreams. That is the strategy we have followed.

Folks, it's working pretty well. Compared to 4 years ago, we have the lowest unemployment rate in 7½ years and 10½ million new jobs, 4½ million new homeowners. The deficit has gone down for 4 years in a row for the first time since before the Civil War. The unemployment rate in Michigan has been less than 5 percent every month this year for the first time in a generation. And for the first time since the 1970's, it is the United States that is producing more cars and selling more cars than any other country in the world. Wages are going up for the first time in a decade. There are 1.8 million fewer people on welfare. Child sup-

port collections have gone up 40 percent, and on October 1st, 10 million hard-working Americans will get an increase in the minimum wage.

We are on the right track for the 21st century. But if we want to get there, we've got to stop asking who is to blame and start asking, what are we going to do together to make this the country it ought to be for our children and our grandchildren?

This bridge I want to build has a lot of components. We have to have stronger families. That's why I fought for the family and medical leave law, so you could take a little time off from work for a baby's birth or a parent's illness without losing your job, why I fought to give parents the V-chip to control inappropriate television for their younger children, why I fought against advertising of tobacco to young people. It's illegal in every State in the country, but it happens everywhere.

It means stronger communities. That's why I fought for the poorest communities in this country to have empowerment zones. Detroit got one and cut the unemployment by more than half in only 3 years. We can turn the cities around with work, work, work, and education.

I now know some things that I didn't know 4 years ago about the American people, and I can tell you I am more optimistic today than I was the day I took the oath of office. I am more idealistic today than I was the day I took the oath of office because I know today from seeing what's happened in the last 4 years there is nothing that you cannot do if you're given the tools to do the job, and that's exactly what I intend to see done.

I believed 4 years ago that if we put 100,000 police on the street and gave our police the ability to work with people in community settings, if we got tougher with serious criminals and gave our young people something to say yes to, we could bring the crime rate down. Well, for 4 years in a row, the crime rate has dropped in America. And now, just today, the Justice Department pointed out that last year the crime rate dropped 9 percent, the largest drop in a decade. There are one million fewer victims of crime than there were a year ago. That is a good sign for America.

Now, I don't want to hesitate for a minute on this. I'm not declaring victory against crime, I'm just saying we're moving in the right direction. And what we need to do is not to abandon the present course but to bear down and do

more of it, more police on the street, more criminals and guns and drugs off the street. We can do that if you will stay the course.

We've got to keep this economy growing and strong. That means we have to balance the budget all right, because that keeps interest rates down. That means lower car payments. That means lower home mortgage payments. That means lower credit card payments. That means businesses can borrow money at lower rates to hire more people and raise wages and improve productivity. That's important. But we have to do it in the right way. We don't have to wreck Medicare or Medicaid or turn our backs on education or the environment.

We need to invest more money in research and technology to create those high-wage jobs for the future, not less. And we need an aggressive trade policy that opens new markets. One of the proudest moments I've had as President of the United States was going to an automobile showroom in Tokyo and sitting in a car made in the United States of America for sale.

But let me say again, my friends, we cannot build that bridge with any of those components unless the foundation is world-class education. We've already done a lot to lower the costs of college loans, create the AmeriCorps program, which has allowed 50,000 young people to go to college and serve in their communities, raising standards, supporting improved Head Start programs and other things, but there is more we have to do.

Forty percent of the children in this country can still not read on their own when they are in the third grade. I want to mobilize an army of mentors and reading teachers to work with our schools and our teachers and our parents to make sure that by the year 2000 every 8-year-old can look at a book and say, "I can read it all by myself."

I want to make sure that every classroom in this country in every school not only has computers and teachers trained to help the students use them but is actually hooked up to the information superhighway, to the Internet, to the World Wide Web. For those of you like me who don't know a lot about computers, that may not mean much, so let me put it in plain language. Let me tell you what that means. If we hook up every classroom in America to the information superhighway, what it means is this: that in the poorest inner-city classrooms, in the most remote rural classrooms and all the class-

rooms in between, for the first time in the history of our country, all of our schoolchildren will have access to the same learning at the same level of quality in the same way in the same time as the students in the richest schools in America. That is achievable, and we must do it.

I want to make sure that we make at least 2 years of education after high school, in a vocational center, a community college, in a college—at least 2 years after high school—just as universal in 4 years as a high school diploma is today. And we can do that by giving the American people a \$1,500 tax credit for the typical cost of community college education, a dollar-for-dollar reduction for the cost of the tuition, and we ought to do it.

I believe that we should give families a deduction for the cost of college tuition up to \$10,000 for the cost of any education after high school for people of any age—yes, the children but their parents, too, if they need it. We ought to do that.

How has the auto industry come back—with greater productivity, smarter technology, and people who are trained to do it. Technology, education, training, hard work, and smart work; it all begins with education.

And let me say one of the most important parts of education is making sure that we tear down the artificial wall in every school system in America between what is academic and what is vocational. I just was in that Bill Ford Center and I saw those young students, those young men and women working on those machines. That's vocational work. I wasn't smart enough to do it. I didn't know how to program those machines. It was academic work as well as vocational work. It was mindwork. It was smart work. And that is the work of the 21st century. And we have to support that work in manufacturing, in services, in agriculture, in all forms of endeavor.

When I became President, one of the things that really bothered me was that our country was the only advanced economy in the world that didn't have an organized system to make sure that every student—like Lynn Rivers 21 years ago or Brian today—that every student who didn't go on to a college at least had a chance to continue their education by blending school and work. We call it now school-to-work opportunities. And when I was a Governor, I worked hard to improve those opportunities, and

as President, we have worked hard to give 26 States, including Michigan, the opportunity to put employers and educators together to build a seamless web of people moving from school to work in the high-wage, high-skilled jobs that can earn them good incomes.

This is school-to-work week in America. And today, there are 500,000 students and 105,000 employers and 1,800 schools, including both John Glenn and William Ford schools, that have embraced the school-to-work opportunities our Nation now offers. We have to keep going until every school system in America and every student in America has the opportunities I saw your people having today. They deserve it, and it will build our economy.

Brian Duka has a bright future today because of the education he received here and because of the work he's doing now. And we have to blend education and work for a lifetime. One of the most important proposals I had that I regret this Congress didn't pass that I hope the next one will is to take all these little training programs the Government has and take all the money and put it in a big block, and when someone is unemployed or underemployed, if they're qualified for Federal training help, send them a check for \$2,500 and say, "You know where the nearest good training program is. Take your money there, get the training, find yourself a job so that if you lose your job, you can get a better one instead of a worse one."

If we do that for everybody—give everybody a "GI bill," a skills grant that will give them a chance to move from job to job by going up, not going down—we will strengthen America's families and strengthen America's economy. Education is for everyone of every age who needs it, and we have to give them that.

My friends, in 7 weeks from today, you'll get to make a decision about whether to build a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past, about whether you believe we're all in this together or to use my wife's term, it takes a village, or whether you think we're on our own. This country always, always, always wins when we put down the things that divide us, when we stop fighting, when we stop being small and we think big and we work together.

We have got to build a bridge to the 21st century that every single American can walk across. There is no nation as well-positioned for that century as we are. And all of our diversity—I look out in this crowd today, there are people here today from—I can see at least seven different ethnic groups just looking out here and I'll bet many more. That is a strength for the United States. There is no country as well-positioned as we are for this global economy if we will lay the foundation, and it starts with building that bridge on the finest educational system in the world.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:36 p.m. on the athletic field at John Glenn High School. In his remarks, he referred to Brian Duka, former student, and Bill Richardson, principal, William D. Ford Career Technical Center; former Representative William D. Ford; Dwayne H. Moore, superintendent, and Gregory J. Baracy, assistant superintendent for general administration, Wayne-Westland Community Schools; Neil Thomas, principal, John Glenn High School; Edward H. McNamara, Wayne County executive; Mayor Robert J. Thomas of Westland; and State Representatives Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick and Eileen DeHart.

Remarks in Flossmoor, Illinois September 17, 1996

The President. I don't know how we could arrange it with the school's schedule, but I'd like to take the band and the cheerleaders with me for the rest of the campaign. Sort of rev up the crowd.

Superintendent Murray, Dr. Moriarty, Board of Education President Blackstone, to the other

distinguished school officials and teachers who are here. Let me say when I got off the airplane today at the Air National Guard terminal in Chicago, I was met by the colonel there, who said, "It's a really wonderful school that you're going to visit." And he said, "I want you to have this flag pin and these bubble gum cards